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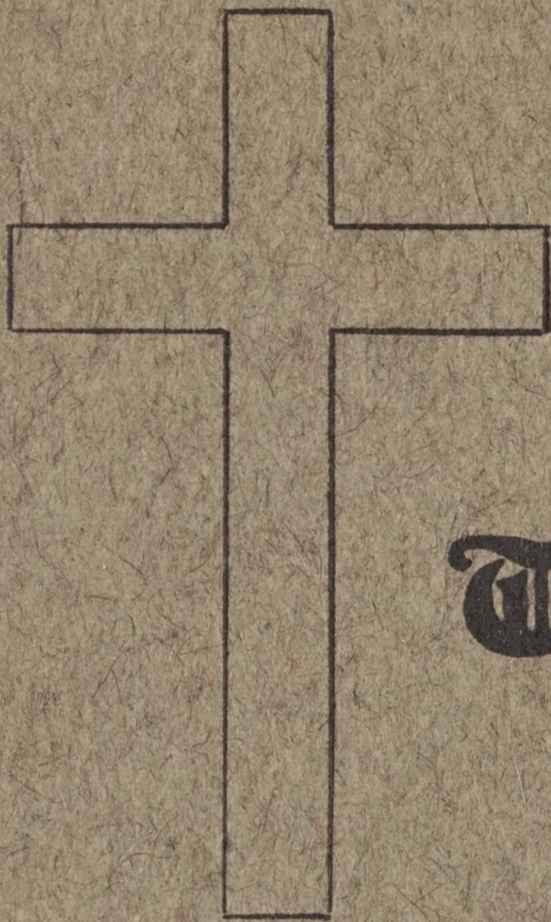
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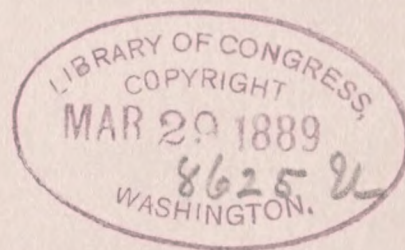
**The
Maid
of
Bethany**

BY ALBERT H HARDY

THE
MAID OF BETHANY

— A Study of the Christ —

BY
ALBERT H HARDY



— AUTHOR'S EDITION —

Springfield Mass

1889

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“Now when Jesus was in Bethany, in the house of Simon the leper,

There came unto him a woman having an alabaster box of very precious ointment, and poured it on his head, as he sat at meat.

Verily I say unto you, Wheresoever this gospel shall be preached in this whole world, there shall also this, that this woman hath done, be told for a memorial of her.”

—ST. MATTHEW XXVI, 6, 7, 13.



The Maid of Bethany

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THE PILGRIMS.

"But what went ye out for to see? A prophet? Yea, I say unto you, and more than a prophet."—ST. MATTHEW XI, 9.

1 BROUGHT out and sharply defined against the purpling evening sky, a small party of country folk might have been seen wearily making their way along the Bethlehem road in Palestine. It was in the olden time, and there were perhaps twenty in number. The party was composed entirely of the common people of the country, their faces indicating this as much as did the garments which they wore. Two young men headed the procession, and thus one spoke to the other:

"By the faith of my fathers hath the Maid of Bethany confessed by her speech her love for this man whom they call Christ. Is it not for this that she hath deserted her home and people and fled to Jerusalem?"

No one in the party seemed at first willing to deny or affirm this strange statement made by one of their number, and the train moved along for some distance in silence.

The young man who had been thus addressed by his companion was one of the most striking and imposing figures in the group. He was slightly above the medium height, well and firmly put together, and what was most peculiar and noticeable in his appearance was the

fact that, unlike any of his companions, he was fair-haired and light; his curling hair and close-cut beard being almost as yellow as spun gold. Otherwise his face was of the Jewish type, as were those of the others of the company, but the rest were mostly dark; some darkened by the sun more than nature had intended them.

This man whom his companions called Michael, although one of the youngest of the party seemed a sort of leader, and everything showed that he was a favorite, and that he was looked upon with the greatest respect, and even admiration by those with him.

Perhaps it was his physical, perhaps his mental make-up, that put him and kept him a little above his fellows, but be that as it may, he had that quality, or combination of qualities which makes men leaders. Had it been his fate to engage in battle he would always have been found at the front; had he been an explorer, no wilderness or forest would have had terrors for him; had he been a man of modern times he would still have led, had his lines of life been cast among the high or the low, the rich or the poor. His was a brave spirit; his a noble nature.

This was indicated by the erect carriage, the firm step and the bright, fearless eye of the young man. Every action showed that Michael was not a self-imposed leader, but that he had been put there by his people who recognized his strength, both mental and physical, and his superiority over them.

So unusual was this man's appearance among the dark people of his race, that they called him the "Sunshine." His nature was as light, bright and sunshiny as his face; he was perhaps two and twenty, and although he had looked with favor upon many

of the young women of Bethany, he had not shown special attention toward any of them. He and the Maid of Bethany had been children and playmates together, and he loved her as only such natures as his can love.

Michael's companion spoke: "Art thou so enamored of the fair Maid of Bethany that thou dost so notice her goings and comings? Art thou envious lest she desert her people and cleave unto the new faith?"

"This hath she already done, if report be true," said the first, "and verily, it seemeth to me, it is thou who lovest the Maid, not I."

The other closed his lips firmly, and made no reply.

The quaint yet picturesque dress of the party would have impressed the modern observer as curious, and worthy of study; walking as the people did, in the gathering gloom, they presented a weird and by no means uninteresting appearance.

But who were these people? and whither were they going? In those days the question would scarcely have been asked. They were a band of pilgrims from the country on their way to Jerusalem, where Christ was even then performing his wonderful miracles, and preaching to the people. His fame had extended to the innermost country, and few there were, whether inmates of stately palace or humble cot, who, whether they acknowledged him Saviour or pretender, did not marvel at his doings and his speech. His fame had spread so that not to have seen him were to have appeared a dullard in the eyes of the simple-minded people.

Multitudes came from miles and miles around, wondering at his wonderful power, even though they were not converted to his teachings.

The people who composed this group as it passed

along this night in the waning light, were from the humble walks of life, herdsmen and women who toiled in the fields. Their dresses were of the most quiet colors, no royal purples nor scarlets appearing among them. They were the people of the people. Theirs were for the most part Hebrew faces, many of them aged and lined by time and toil, but every eye was fixed on the distant hills toward which they were journeying. None lacked in interest, yet on some of the faces might have been found traces of scorn, and many a lip curled at the mention of some marvellous act performed by the Master.

The voices of the pilgrims were low and subdued, and nearly their whole conversation was directed toward the scenes they were to visit. The way had been long, and although their feet had grown weary the interest had never flagged. The party went for some ways after the conversation between the young men, each one appearing to be absorbed in his or her own thoughts, when an aged man who was at the head, and who from his position, and the respect shown him by the band, seemed a sort of prophet, began speaking. The old man walked with a staff, his white hair and beard falling on his shoulders and breast, not unlike some of the pictures representing the patriarchs of the times.

The old man spoke in the Hebrew tongue, and said: "Verily if what the people say be true, this man whom they call Jesus hath done strange and wonderful things. Peradventure, he hath worked a charm upon the Maid of Bethany, and the spell may now be upon her. They say he hath raised the dead from their graves, so they walk and talk, and are once more breathing and living beings: that he hath the power to heal the

sick and to cast out devils; that, when the tempests are raging, and the waters run high, so that no ship can live in the flood, this man hath by a spoken word, hushed the waves and the storms. Blame thou not too much the Maid of Bethany, lest thou findest she hath not the power to resist this man."

As the old man continued his talk, the pilgrims drew closer, drinking in all he said, for although the stories were not new to them, yet they were always ready to hear them repeated.

THE CITY GATES.

"They drew nigh unto Jerusalem, and were come to Bethphage, unto the Mount of Olives."—ST. MATTHEW XXI, 1.

2 WHEN the old man had finished, the young man who had first spoken said:

"By my faith this cannot be true. They be but some trumped-up tales of those who hath followed him so long that their minds do wander and they have little wit. None but the God of our fathers hath the power to give life, and he alone can still the waves and storms. Away with thee, old man; hast thou not heard the sayings and teachings of the prophets?"

"Aye, verily," answered the first, speaking without anger, "They do say this Jesus hath power to speak with the Father, and that he is a mediator, doing nothing by himself."

"Hath he a light about his head? and doth he fly on the wings of the wind?" asked a woman, who had pressed forward as the conversation became more general.

"It hath been said," spoke one in an awed whisper, "that he goeth from place to place in the night, and that a dark shadow doth accompany him."

The night was fast creeping on, and in the east a faint crescent moon weirdly lifted its crest above the low hills.

"If he hath the power to make the dead to live, why then hath he not the same power to make the live to

die?" asked one. "He may do us evil, and who can say the spell is not even now upon us?"

"He doeth no deeds but those of kindness," spoke an old woman, "he hath yet done ill to no one."

"This may be idle talk," said another. "Is he better than we? Hath he not passions, and hate? Is he not like unto us to love his friends and hate his enemies?"

"Surely thou hast heard," answered the old man, "what hath so often been said of him, that he hath a human and a divine nature."

"Peradventure, so hath all of us who art fashioned by the God of our fathers," said one, who had not before joined in the conversation.

The knotty theological questions which have puzzled men of learning from that day to our own, were not for those humble and honest country folk to decide, making as they were that long journey, nearly nineteen centuries ago, many of them to satisfy a curiosity rather than as seekers after the light of truth.

Argue as they might, view the subject in any and all the lights of which their minds were capable, they could not all grasp the idea of the God-man, he who was both human and divine. Their lines of argument were not without sense—they were practical to say the least. What they saw they could but marvel at, but this did not, in all cases, make them believers. As we see a man to-day, practicing his wonderful feats of legerdemain, so these people saw the miracles of the Christ. They were struck with wonder and awe, but they did not believe a divine hand was back of it all. He was to them a magician, to whom it seemed dangerous to listen, for all were impressed with his words and works, admit it though they might not.

They were strong faces, those of the pilgrims, but what did they express? Let us look at the old man who walked in the rear of the others, and who said little during the whole journey. His was to listen, not to join in the conversation of the others. His hair and beard were long. There were lines of care about the deep-set eyes and firm lips—lines of suffering. His large crooked nose gave great strength to the face which had not a weak line in it. But, striking and strong as it was, it was far from being a spiritual one, and it was at times almost evil in its expression. It was, however, a face once seen to be remembered, and to make an impression, though perhaps not always a pleasant one. The face showed the owner was not one likely to be easily moved or persuaded by any theories or isms that did not appear to him perfectly clear. Not even the teachings of the Christ could influence such as he, were his mind fully made up that his were the truths and the whole truths. Like the others of the party, the old man had listened to the Hebrew teachings from his youth up, and was it wonderful that such a man should be slow in accepting and being converted to a new religion?

There were in the group the faces of old women who with their scanty hair, bright eyes, and wrinkles, were almost witch-like in appearance. They were not the ones first to be converted to the teachings of the Master.

Then there were pleasanter faces, among them the young men and maidens, faces that showed that their owners had seen work, and some of them care, but they did not have the hard lines of the others, for their eyes were yet bright and tender, and if they smiled their faces lighted up brightly, and when they

laughed there was a true and honest ring to their voices which comes only from the lips of youth and innocence.

There were no children in the party, but one or two of the young women could not have been more than sixteen or seventeen years of age. Middle-aged men and women were to be found in the greatest number, and they seemed to form the foundation of the group. They were solid, honest looking people, all used to toil, and many of them to privation.

Clearly the stories which had been circulated about the country regarding the miracles of the Christ had made a deep impression on the minds of the members of the little band, and as they journeyed on, their simple hearts filled with awe, wonder, and at times malice, when they thought of the carpenter's son who had been lifted so far above them in the hearts of so many of the people.

The sharp horn of the crescent moon, now swinging low and brightly in the eastern heavens, and appearing like a great shining jewel, standing out as it did from its dark setting of dull blue sky, pierced through a billowy gray cloud, rending it as the harvester rends the waving grain with his sickle, and then becoming partially lost in the rift which it had made, but still shining through, as though a thin veil had been dropt before its face; the purple which pervaded the balmy atmosphere faded to gray, excepting where the fields were touched by the moon's rays, and in such spots the grain was turned to riper gold, the shining leaves of the trees had the appearance of silver, and the roads, dusty and hot during the day, were bathed in a flood of mellow light; away behind the party of pilgrims a belated bird sent out his low good-night song, all the air was hushed, and just beyond the travelers were the gates of the Holy City.

THE CHRIST.

"Ye call me Master and Lord: and ye say well; for so I am."

—ST. JOHN XIII, 13.

3 On the same day when the party of travelers passed along the highroad, a solitary person walked silently and thoughtfully among the trees, so the party might almost have brushed against his garments as they entered the city. It was the figure of a man. He was very tall and there was something in his mien which would at any time have attracted notice, although his face and garments showed that he was accustomed to out-door life, and that his habits were not unlike the poor. His dress was of dark grey or brown, dusty, much worn, and made in the loose, flowing fashion of the time.

He wore no sandals on his feet, but they were bare, and like his garments showed that the man had walked far. His face was in some respects peculiar and in every way remarkable. Then—as it certainly would to-day were another such face to appear—the people were as much impressed by the face as the man.

He looked to be thirty years of age, as he in reality was —slightly past thirty. His eyes were large, full, dark brown in color, and with an element in them that cannot be described. Who shall say what the people of his time saw in their depths? They were wonderful eyes; beautiful, clear and expressive, but sad withal. The nose was the most prominent and striking feature of the face. It was large and slightly crooked,

giving a marvelous strength to the outline. The lips were full, red and indicated perfect health. The teeth when disclosed, which were seldom, corresponded with the rest of his face and were white and even. The complexion was dark and swarthy, almost russet, set off as it was by a dark brown mustache, drooping well over the large upward-rolling upper lip, and the chin and face was partially covered by a beard strong and heavy, and corresponding in color with the mustache. His hair was long, having almost the appearance of being unkempt, drawn away from either brow and falling upon the wearer's shoulders in loose curls. The face was a perfect type of strength, vigor and manliness, from the broad forehead to the strong, muscular neck.

The figure was straight, almost majestic in bearing, and although six feet in height he looked more. His shoulders were rather narrow, but each curve of them as well as the well-rounded arms and figure, was extremely graceful in outline. As we see him, his head is bent, and his eyes downcast. It was the person of the Christ.

Stepping deeper into the shadow, the man waited until the company had passed, and then followed after at some distance, entering almost immediately one of the narrowest and most obscure streets of the city.

His entrance was heralded by no demonstration by the people, but he came as did the humblest of the humble, not seeking nor desiring notice. There was a look of more than care upon his strong and sensitive face as he walked towards one of the smallest and poorest houses in the street.

The expression on his face was like that of a man who has wearied of earthly glory. It is not to compare this of all men with those of our time, who have reached a high place in the minds and hearts of the people, who have won fame by one or more of the various channels which make men renowned. The crowds followed his every footstep, hung upon every word that fell from his lips, watched him with either admiration or contempt, until who shall wonder that the Master at times grew weary of the multitudes, and desired and sought the seclusion and quiet which he could find only in some of the humble homes of his people.

His was not to mingle with the merry or gay but he chose rather the shady paths and lanes, when in the country, and the narrow and secluded streets of the city. This night he appeared weary and travel-worn as though he had walked far.

THE NIGHT WINDS.

"Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the children of God."—ST. MATTHEW V, 9.

4 WALKING part of the way down the narrow street, the man stopped in front of a small dwelling, and knocking lightly at the door it was opened to him, and he stepped within the humble threshold. Within, as on the outside, there was everything to indicate poverty. But however poorly the room may have been furnished, there was an air of perfect neatness about the place, which showed that although the inmates may have been poor, they had about them some of the better traits of life.

He was met at the door by an old woman who on seeing her visitor came forward hurriedly, and bent in absolute adoration before him.

"Is it thou, my Master?" she said. "Thou art welcome to my home and my fireside. More welcome than all the kings and princes of the earth."

He lifted her to her feet, but she still clung to his garments. Only a few words were spoken between the two, but in those words it was shown that the woman was one of the most ardent followers of the new faith, and that the Master's will was hers.

In spite of her great age, her eyes were as bright and her sense of hearing as acute as a woman half her years.

The old woman listened furtively for several minutes, while a look of alarm, and then one which seemed to

approach fear or anger crept into her weather-beaten face.

No sooner had the Christ entered this home of one of his people than another figure approached at the end of the street. It was a woman, and by her elastic and firm step one could see that she was young, although no part of her face was exposed to view. So closely was she enveloped in the heavy garment which fell nearly to the ground, that her face was not discernible, but every line of her finely developed figure was brought out by the drapery, so that seen there in the dim light she was one of almost perfect grace and symmetry.

Alone this woman stood in the quiet street, seeming to listen for the least sound that should come to her from either the city outside or the street itself, until at last she seemed to gain courage, and to suddenly resolve upon action. Once more this woman looked quickly up and down the street as if to make sure she was unobserved, and then, certain that she was alone, she walked hurriedly on until she was in front of the cot which the Christ had entered. Here the girl once more hesitated.

The night was fast coming on. The early moon was sinking low in the west, and only the stars shone dimly through the dull blue sky. A soft fragrant breeze came through the trees that bordered the street, and the perfume from some rich eastern flower made all the air heavy with its scent. Long stood the lonely figure before the humble cot, seeming to deliberate whether she should turn back or enter.

Was it imagination? or some fancy of the girl's excited brain? and was it a step she heard approaching from the other end of the street? There could be no

mistaking it now, for along with the noise of the step the girl could dimly see the outline of a man. There are times when one is alone in the darkness that a footstep is more welcome than is the sunshine by day; there are other times when a footfall in the night brings only alarm.

It was a heavy step which the girl heard on this night, and although she did not know fear, she would have given all she possessed to have been away from the spot.

There is a physical and a moral fear, one which may harm the body, the other the mind or soul. They are different, yet alike. The girl had no fear for her personal safety as she stood there alone in a strange street, and in a strange city; she had wandered alone too long up and down the country roads of her native Bethany to fear that danger would come to her, but although her action to-night she knew to have about it nothing of evil, she knew that her trials would be great were others to discover her presence and know of her seemingly strange act.

The footsteps came closer and closer, and the girl grew more excited, trembling like the leaves on the trees above her head as she imagined she was observed by the stranger. No, he did not see her, he was passing on, intent on his own thoughts. The girl tried to shrink closer into the shadow of the cot, the wind rustled noisily through the boughs of the trees, and the figure was so near to her that she could have reached out her hand and touched his garments.

The light came only from the stars, and the man did not see her. He turned and faced the place in which she stood. There was a stifled cry, and the one word, "Michael," just trembled on her lips. She would have

fallen had she not caught a friendly tree for support. But the man had not seen into the dark deep shadow nor had he heard the stifled cry, and not stopping nor turning, he disappeared from view.

Twice the girl started to retrace her steps, and twice returned. At last drawing her garment still closer about her she went to the rear of the dwelling where she knocked timidly. The door was quickly opened to her by the old woman.

"Who art thou? and what is thy desire?" she asked.

"It is I, the Maid of Bethany," came the reply in a whisper and in the Hebrew tongue, "and I desire rest and comfort."

After a short whispered consultation between the two, the door was noiselessly closed and the Maid of Bethany went back into the night.

THE MAID.

"For she loved much; but to whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little."—ST. LUKE VII, 47.

5 THOSE who have visited the Jerusalem of to-day know the houses and streets of the Holy City; those who have studied the Jerusalem of olden time can picture the low rude houses which in some sections were little more than huts. To one of these let me take you on a night a few days after the opening of our story. It was in the outskirts, and far from the busy marts of trade and commerce. It was among the humble homes, the very humblest, yet there was love and reverence and friendship found, and to the threshold many a weary wanderer took his way, always sure to find strength and comfort.

Within these walls dwelt James, a worker in metals, the son of Matthias, and his father's sister, Sarah. The father was dead, and the two lived within the narrow walls, loved by their neighbors, and those who knew them best.

But there was a strange inconsistency in the religious beliefs of the two. James had long ago become an enthusiastic convert to the teachings of the Christ, but his aunt scorned other than the faith of her fathers.

To this house had come the Maid of Bethany after leaving her own home, and here she had found a welcome. She was a cousin to James and to him she had come seeking protection from the rough treatment and

rude tongues of her people. All her family, save James, had refused the teachings of the Master, but early he had heard, seen and believed. To him the carpenter's son was indeed the Messiah who had been promised by the prophets in the Old Book, and to the Christ he had given all his allegiance and love.

But what should be said of his cousin, the Maid of Bethany? In her home life in the quiet village she had only the Hebrew teachings from her birth. Like her cousin James, her father was dead, and her mother condemned the Christ as a pretender. She would not be convinced of his divinity. Could her voice have been heard it would have been the loudest to cry, "Crucify him!" "Crucify him!"

It was but a few months before that the Maid of Bethany had first seen the Christ, but from that day when he preached to the great multitude from the hill-side near her mother's home in Bethany, she had been unlike her old free and happy self.

No longer did she work in the fields with her mates, no longer did she tend her mother's flocks by day, or sleep as only a tired maiden can sleep on her lowly bed at night, but all day and far into the night would she wander up and down the valley, sometimes chanting her wild Hebrew songs, but oftener morose and silent.

Her mother's admonitions had little to do with changing the girl's strange moods. Was it love? Was it passion? Was it infatuation?

Michael, who was now with the Bethany pilgrims, knowing as he did that the girl had abandoned home and friends to follow this man who was well nigh worshiped by the people, loved the Maid of Bethany

with a passion born and kept fervent in only such strong, healthy natures and bodies as his. He was a Jew, faithful and true to the teachings of his fathers, and he had come with the pilgrims not so much to see and hear the Christ as to make one more appeal to the woman he loved.

Night was fast settling down about the metal-worker's home. Reclining just without the door and partially in the shadow, her long waving hair falling about her and circling her neck and throat, with her shapely white arms bare and thrown above her head, and her hands clasping a low overhanging bough, was the Maid of Bethany. Many of the people said she was possessed of a devil and shunned her. But to have seen her with her great black eyes half closed, the dark luxuriant lashes now sweeping her cheeks, and now trembling as she half opened her beautiful eyes, she was as fair as a picture by one of the old masters. She was four and twenty, but did not look nearly that.

Her long loose garment clung closely about her, showing as she turned in her half reclining position, all the graceful curves of her body. Idly this strange woman swung with her hands clasping the bough above her. Then the swinging stopped, her great red lips parted, and she half sang, half crooned this wild, passionate Hebrew song:

*"Give me thy light, O moon, for to thee do I
lift up my voice.*

*Shine thou upon the way to him whom my
heart loveth.*

*Sing softly to me, wind, out of the depths of
the forests ;*

*Beat on my breast, O wave, till its wild throbbing
Swells and responds to thee, as when the tempests
Beat the great rocks on the shore when they
are angry.*

O, all ye elements, hear my heart's crying!"

A figure clad in loose brown garments passed from the deep shadow into the bar of moonlight which shone through the trees, and stopped for a moment as though attracted by the music, but for only a moment did it stand in the light.

Without turning, the figure passed quietly into the shadow, and was lost to view. With the appearance of the man, the song stopped, but the Maid of Bethany still swung in her improvised hammock, not seeming to tire of holding her own weight. But the expression on her face changed, her lips closed firmly, and her eyes opened wide. She was very beautiful as she thus lay with the moonlight just touching her face and shoulders. With a strange wild look in her eyes, the woman moved in position so that only a dark outline could be dimly distinguished under the trees. The Christ and the Maid of Bethany had each passed into the shadow.

THE DOVE BOY.

"But Jesus said, Suffer little children, and forbid them not, to come unto me; for of such is the Kingdom of Heaven."

—ST. MATTHEW XIX, 14.

6 It was morning, and just as the sun was touching the low hills with pencillings of gold and rose color, a young lad walked along the broad highway, and stopped outside the city gates.

So beautiful was he that had he been older he might well have posed for any sculptor as a Greek god. But the lad was scarcely fifteen years of age, and although he carried his limbs by no means awkwardly, yet they were not fully rounded, and lacked that muscular development which, if the boy's frame was any indication, would come in later years.

The lad was a mystery even to his few associates in the city. He had also come from Bethany, his name was Arlo, and he sold doves by day in the market place. At night he slept where the dark overtook him, and he was so silent and retiring that those who did not know how sweet and lovable was his nature, were wont to call him sullen.

On this morning when we first see him, Arlo walked for some distance, and then stopped to rest, throwing himself upon the grass and clasping his hands about one knee, which he crooked under him.

He looked fixedly toward the distant hills, and the first rays of the morning sun shone full upon him.

We sometimes in our day see people from the East who have eyes as had this lad. They are found under no other sky, and among no other people. For lack of a better word we call them hazel. Arlo's eyes were not that color. They were a rich brownish grey, large and expressive, with a shade of golden bronze about the pupils when their expression changed, and that was so often that one could almost read his thoughts by his eyes. His face was purely of the eastern type, but more after the Greek than the Hebrew in outline. There was the straight, delicately chiseled nose, the nostrils so narrow and pink that there was an almost imperceptible expansion as the breath came and went. He had thrown off his bright colored turban, and his hair, dark brown in color, curled loosely over a brow as low and white as a woman's.

His lips fell just short of being sensual. When he should grow older the close observer of this boy would say that either the earthy or spiritual nature would predominate, and that it would be wholly one or the other. Not that his face was so weak that he would be governed by whichever life first came to him, but that his mind was so balanced, if the face was an indicator, that he would give himself up to the extreme.

The long white garment which he wore fell to the ground, and his small feet were encased in sandals. Nervously clasping and unclasping his long slender fingers from about his knee, showing by every turn the slight flexible wrists, the lad looked anxiously toward the city gates, as though expecting the arrival of some one.

As the sun sent its slanting rays across the green-sward, the Maid of Bethany stepped briskly through the city gate, and hurried to the boy's side.

"Peace be with thee," she said, as she knelt by him, and softly stroked the lad's silken hair.

"It is thou, at last," said the boy wearily, "what dost thou with me?"

"What knowest thou of the Master?" asked the girl. "Shall I see him? Is his speech ever of me? Ar-lo, thou comest from him, thou art dear to him. He is thy teacher, counselor, friend."

"Peradventure, thou speakest truly," said the boy, as he looked almost indignantly at the Maid, "but the Master is not for such as thou. Does he not preach to the people of their sins? and was it not but yester-e'en he told the woman outside the temple that, to live near him, she must needs be as pure in heart as the little child which she carried at her breast?"

"But I love him!" cried the Maid of Bethany, as she caught almost roughly at the boy's arm.

"Thine is not love, but sacrilege, and ill becometh thee and thy sex," said the boy sternly, as he shook off the woman's hand, and retraced his steps.

The voice was that of a child, the words those of a prophet. Was she such a sinner, was she so vile, that this boy should see how black was her heart and reprimand her? These were the questions she asked herself as she stood there in the full glory of her womanhood and the morning sun, and watched the boy as he disappeared within the gate.

"But I love him," she continued to repeat, over and over to herself.

THE HOLY HILL.

"And all the people that came together to that sight, beholding the things which were done, smote their breasts and returned. And all his acquaintance, and the women that followed him from Galilee, stood afar off, beholding these things."

—ST. LUKE XXIII, 48, 49.

7 DURING his stay in Jerusalem Michael had not failed to see the Maid of Bethany. She always received him kindly, but as a friend rather than as a lover. He was to her a great handsome boy who had foolishly fallen in love with her and still more foolishly insisted upon professing his love. She did not laugh at him, she pitied him. It is indeed a weak-brained and a heartless woman who, loving herself, does not sympathize with others even though their love may be hopeless. But Michael would not abandon hope.

On that terrible day when was enacted the greatest tragedy that the world has ever known, Michael and the Maid of Bethany met at the house of James, the worker in metals.

Who is there that does not know the history of that day in Palestine long and long ago? The Christ was the central figure; around him clustered his followers and those who reviled him.

So rapid was the movement of the great drama that from the early hour when the sun in the course of its endless rounds rose over the famous city, until darkness came, each moment was filled with incidents. As it has been written:

"And straightway in the morning the chief priests held a consultation with the elders and scribes and the whole council and found Jesus and carried him away and delivered him to Pilate."

How eagerly the great crowd waited without the temple. There were murmurs from the inside, but the tumult of voices in the street was like the wind in a mighty forest.

A messenger from the inside brought the news to the waiting multitude.

"It is Pilate's will that the people choose which he shall surrender to them, the Christ or Barrabus the thief."

The faces in the crowd were the mirrors of their preferences. Again a messenger appeared, but this time it was Barrabus himself. He had answered the problem and the fate of the Master was decided.

Then came loud murmurs from the Pretorian, and with hands bound and crowned with a crown of thorns the people who loved him saw their idol led forth between files of armored soldiers. On toward the Holy Hill moved the great procession, but many remained in the city.

Among the latter were familiar faces. Arlo, the dove boy, and the faithful follower of the Christ, had left his doves in the market-place; he was too young to realize the full import of the tidings that were from time to time reaching his ears. That his teacher and friend was in great trouble was enough. He was told that he could not go to him, and the thought of Pilate, the soldiers, and the great men in the temple awed and frightened him.

With face close pressed against the stones in the street the boy lay, while sob after sob shook his slen-

der frame. The excited crowds surged by and no one noticed the boy. Such scenes were not unusual on that day and too many had their own griefs to notice those of another.

The face of the old man who had come to Jerusalem with the pilgrims was sad and thoughtful. James would have given his blood to save the Master, but Pilate's will was law.

Michael and the Maid of Bethany sat together in the house of James. The girl was grandly beautiful in her agony of sorrow. In vain Michael attempted to comfort her.

Up and down the city streets surged the waves of sound, now coming in excited cries and now in heart-piercing moans, but the girl heard them not. To this great passionate creature it was as though her very heart was being crushed. She loved with a love that would brave and bear all, and though she had been told that her passion was sinful and unnatural, yet that passion swayed and ruled her.

Suddenly a derisive cry reached her ears from the street. She started up with a wild look in her eyes, gathered her mantle about her and hurried out. Taking the edge of the crowd she followed to a high eminence where many were gathered together.

The Holy Hill was in sight, and amidst the blaze of light reflected from the armor of the soldiers, their spears and the great mass of people, she saw the arms of a ghastly cross raised in the air.

With a low moan she pressed her hands convulsively to her heart and sank to the earth. When Michael reached her a slender stream of blood was issuing from her lips. The heart of the Maid of Bethany had broken.

*"Mine answer to them that do examine me is this :
"Have we not power to eat and to drink ?
"Have we not power to lead about a sister, a wife,
as well as other apostles and as the brethren of the
Lord, and Cephas?"*

—I CORINTHIANS IX, 3, 4, 5.

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